

Are there any benefits of speaking foreign languages?

Hungarian interpreter Kató Lomb said: 'We should learn languages because language is the only thing worth knowing even poorly' [4]. In the age of globalization the problem of learning foreign languages is becoming more urgent. Some people understand the purpose of learning a second language as a means of interaction with people from foreign countries. Inasmuch as the goal may not be relevant the issue may be obscured or disappear from a person's plans altogether. However, learning foreign languages can be reduced not only to career advancement. In addition to facilitating cross-cultural communication, this trend also positively affects cognitive abilities, develops mindset, boosts confidence [3]. Therefore, learning foreign languages has professional, social and personal benefits.

Manifold studies contend that learning foreign languages has a beneficial effect on a person's cognitive abilities. For instance, researchers Viorica Marion and Anthony Shook tested bilinguals in experiments of task switching. Compared to monolinguals, bilinguals demonstrated a high level of cognitive control that can be elucidated by the ability to balance between two languages [1]. Researcher Rosanna Olsen and her colleagues investigated the structural differences of the brain in monolinguals and bilinguals using fMRI and corroborated the theory that bilingualism increases neuroplasticity [5]. The theory of the ability to solve problems apace, select the necessary information, enhancement of the efficiency of the auditory system of the brain in bilinguals has been confirmed by Jennifer Krizman and her colleagues [1].

In addition, foreign languages provide enhanced employment options and a highly remunerative job. According to Regis Canning, a recruitment agent at the New York staffing firm Temp Agencies, the inscription "fluent in the language" in the resume arouses the interest of employers [2]. Albeit the job may not require knowledge of foreign languages, bilinguals may look more profitable in the eyes of the employer.

Some people claim that learning a foreign language is a nugatory activity if there is no need to travel and apply language skills at work. Furthermore, learning a second language a person may disregard knowledge of his native language. However, in addition to professional and communicative aspects learning

foreign languages can have a salutary effect on health. In a study of the effect of bilingualism on human cognitive abilities Evy Woumans has found that bilingualism can impede cognitive decline and decelerate the progression of Alzheimer's disease [7]. Moreover, the understanding of the peculiarities of the native language can be achieved through the study of foreign languages. According to research focused on the impact of second language education, learning a foreign language can help to improve reading skills, grammar, and vocabulary when using the native language [6]. Geoffrey Willans, an English writer and journalist, said: 'You can never understand one language until you understand at least two' [4].

Learning a new language can have a range of cognitive, health and professional benefits. Researchers have shown that the bilingual brain can have better attention and task-switching capacities than the monolingual brain, thanks to its developed ability to inhibit one language while using another. In addition, bilingualism has positive effects at both ends of the age spectrum: bilingual children as young as seven months can better adjust to environmental changes, while bilingual seniors can experience less cognitive decline [3]. Furthermore, speaking foreign languages bodes a lucrative career. Encouraging young children to learn a foreign language can be a great boon to the future.

References

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